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Inside Washington

Casey Threatens Prosecution

Is Washington 'Post' Above the Law?

A former top intelligence official has charged that the *Washington Post*, in its drive for sensational headlines and a Pulitzer Prize, has threatened the lives of American citizens.

George Carver, a former deputy director of the CIA and acknowledged expert on intelligence and national security issues, says that a recent *Post* story by Bob Woodward detailing U.S. intelligence intercepts of Libyan terrorist messages has resulted in "the loss of a facility that we have used to obtain prior warnings of terrorist attacks."

"That loss can cost American citizens their lives," Carver said during a recent appearance on Cable News Network's "Crossfire" program. "And I do not regard one American life as being worth a byline for Bob Woodward or a Pulitzer Prize for the *Washington Post*.

But Woodward, contacted by HUMAN EVENTS, insisted that he had only "added some detail" to what the President had already said about the Libyan messages. He denounced Carver's accusations as "scurrilous."

Woodward, of course, is one of the *Post* reporters who won a Pulitzer Prize for reporting on the Watergate scandal that brought down President Richard Nixon. Woodward, who is now in charge of investigative journalism at the *Post*, has since developed a notorious reputation among conservatives for writing stories that experts believe have compromised secret operations and damaged national security.

Woodward, for example, has attempted to expose secret Western assistance to the Afghan resistance and U.S. plans to destabilize the Qaddafi regime in Libya. Woodward was the co-author of a May 12, 1985, *Post* story about secret U.S. counter-terrorism operations in Lebanon that may have inspired last year's terrorist hijacking of TWA flight 847 and the murder of Navy diver Robert Stethem.

The criticism of Woodward by George Carver came in the wake of the revelation by the *Post* that it was recently warned that it may be prosecuted if it proceeds with yet another story about secret U.S. intelligence activities.

The *Post* reported that it and several other publications were accused by Casey of already having violated Section 798 of the U.S. Code, which prohibits the disclosure of such information in a manner harmful to the U.S. The *Post* said Casey was referring to stories about intercepted Libyan messages.

President Reagan justified the April 14 attack on Libya by revealing that the U.S. had conclusive evidence that "the terrorist bombing of the La Belle discotheque was planned and executed under the direct orders of the Libyan regime." The bombing killed an American serviceman.

"On March 25," the President said, "more than a week before the attack, orders were sent from Tripoli to the Libyan People's Bureau in East Berlin to conduct the terrorist attack against Americans to cause maximum and indiscriminate casualties. Libya's agents then planted the bomb."

"On April 4, the People's Bureau alerted Tripoli that the attack would be carried out the following morning. The next day, they reported back to Tripoli on the great success of their mission."

Former CIA Deputy Director Carver said that "the President spoke more than he should have" in going public with information about the nature of the evidence. However, the President obviously did so to avoid criticism from the media and elsewhere that his attack on Libya was without justification.

But Carver charged that the *Washington Post*, in an April 22 follow-up story by Bob Woodward that went into extraordinary detail about the intercepted messages, "then compounded the problem by pinpointing what Libyan messages had been intercepted [and] what Libyan codes had been broken, thus denying us in the future the kind of warning of terrorism we've had in the past."

Carver drew a sharp distinction between what the President had said and what the *Post* had published. In contrast to the President, Woodward had quoted directly from the Libyan messages, had referred to the times during the day that they had been sent, and had described the length of one of them.

According to Carver, "we have grounds for prosecution [of the *Post*] right now" under Section 798.

Sen. David Durenberger (R-Minn.), chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, seems to agree. He was quoted in—of all places—the *Post*

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as saying that he didn't think the President's disclosure had "legitimized [the *Post*] story. He [Woodward] quoted from a [Libyan] communication, and the statute prohibits doing that."

Woodward, when asked if he were aware of Section 798 when he wrote the story, replied, "Mr. Casey has made us aware of it." This was a reference to the subsequent meeting between Casey and *Post* editors, where the *Post* was warned about publishing another such article.

Woodward defended his article about the Libyan messages, saying, "I'm mildly amused that the first call I get from HUMAN EVENTS is because I've written something that totally supports what Ronald Reagan has said."

"We live in a world of skepticism," he added, "and everyone we talked to said that the President's right on this, and 'we're going to give you more detail.' The barn door was already open, the sides were kicked down, and the roof was blown off after he spoke. And we said, 'Here's an important public issue, and this is a little bit more about the nature of the evidence.' It's a story we should do as a newspaper."

In regard to stories involving national security, Woodward insisted that "We always try to weigh carefully what we do."

This is, indeed, at least the public position of the *Post*. Last year *Post* Chairman Katharine Graham herself warned the media against revealing information that could undermine the war against terrorism.

In a London speech, Graham said that "We in the media have made mistakes," and she cited an example: "You may recall that in April 1983, some 60 people were killed in a bomb attack on the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. At the time, there was coded radio traffic between Syria, where the operation was being run, and Iran, which was supporting it. Alas, one television network and a newspaper columnist reported that the U.S. government had intercepted the traffic. Shortly thereafter, the traffic ceased. This undermined efforts to capture the terrorist leaders and eliminated a source of information about future attacks. Five months later, apparently the same terrorists struck again at the Marine barracks in Beirut; 241 servicemen were killed."

The concern raised by George Carver about the stories on the Libyan messages is that the added details provided by the *Post* have also eliminated an important source of information about terror-

CIA Director Casey obviously shares the concern. He met with *Post* Executive Editor Benjamin Bradlee and Managing Editor Leonard Downie on May 2 to warn them against publishing another story about U.S. intelligence activities that he had found out about.

During the discussion, Casey reportedly also told the *Post* editors that the Woodward story on the Libyan messages constituted one of five "absolutely cold violations" of the law that his agency had identified.

Carver believes that Casey delivered a "clear warning shot" to the *Post* editors, implying that prosecution will be sought if the *Post* violates the law again.